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Remarks

In connection with the above-referenced patent application, and in response to the Office Action dated December 11, 2008 in connection therewith, Applicants hereby amend the claims as provided herein, and respectfully request reconsideration of the application in light of these amendments. Specifically, Applicants have amended the instant independent claims by incorporating the limitations of corresponding dependent claims which have been indicated as comprising allowable subject matter. Thus, in light of the amendments herein, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are patentable over the cited references and the application is in condition for allowance.

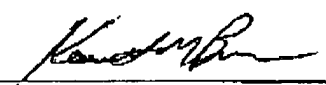
In the instant application, claims 1-26 are pending. In the instant Office Action, claims 1, 8, 10-15, 17, 22, 24 and 25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,823,055, issued on Nov. 23, 2004 to G. Mayer *et al.* (hereinafter, "*Mayer*") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,353,331, issued on October 4, 1994 to M. Emery *et al.* (hereinafter, "*Emery*"); and claims 2-7, 9, 18-21 and 23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentable over *Mayer* in view of *Emery* and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,622,016, issued on Sept. 16, 2003 to T. Sladek *et al.* Claims 16 and 26 stand objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but have been indicated as comprising allowable subject matter.

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By way of this submission, Applicants have amended instant independent claims 1 and 17 to incorporate the limitations of corresponding dependent claims 16 and 26, respectively (as well as the limitations of intervening claims 15 and 25, respectively), in order to overcome all of the outstanding rejections thereto. As a result, Applicants have canceled claims 15, 16, 25 and 26. Thus, independent claims 1 and 17, as amended, recite allowable subject matter and are patentable over the cited references. And since each of the remaining pending claims (*i.e.*, claims 2-14 and 18-24) depend from one of these independent claims, each of these claims is patentable for at least the same reasons. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in light of this submission. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's attorney, Kenneth M. Brown, at (908) 582-5998, should there be any questions or issues for discussion in the reconsideration of the pending application.

Respectfully,

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